



King's Research Portal

DOI:

[10.1017/S0022046915001785](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046915001785)

Document Version

Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Burns, A. (2016). Review of David Brown (ed.), *Durham cathedral: History, fabric and culture* (Yale, 2015). *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 67(1), 166-167. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046915001785>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Durham Cathedral. History, fabric and culture. Pp. xiv + 602 incl. 4 colour frontispieces and 422 black and white and colour ills. Pp. xiv + 602 incl. 4 colour frontispieces and 422 black and white and colour ills. Yale University Press (for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art), 2015. £75. 978 0 300 20818 4

The long wait for Durham to join the list of English cathedrals afforded a modern and serious history is at last ended with the appearance of a typically handsome volume from Yale. No reviewer could or should fail to be impressed by and benefit from the lavish provision of high-quality illustrations on offer – both photographs of the cathedral building and associated material culture, and plans and reproductions of manuscripts and artworks. The volume is the size of a coffee-table book, and will certainly grace any coffee table sufficiently robust to bear its considerable weight.

Brown's volume follows the more expansive model of cathedral history adopted by the best of its recent precursors, offering far more than a history of the fabric. Eight chapters of historical overview (encompassing both the pre-history of the peregrinations of Cuthbert and consideration of Durham Priory's medieval cells) are followed by twelve concentrating on buildings, the material culture of the cathedral and its setting. Five chapters are devoted to worship, music and their interaction with the building; and a fourth group of seven essays deals with the library, education and scholarship, taking in an excursion in the company of Jeremy Catto to explore the history of Durham College in Oxford. Brief surveys of the cathedral in literature and art lead on to a thoughtful afterword by the current dean; many will also welcome the full and instructive bibliography with which the volume ends.

It is impossible in a short review to offer a full appraisal of the individual chapters, for which any single reviewer also inevitably lacks sufficient expertise, so some overall impressions will have to suffice. The volume brings out well some of the most distinctive aspects of Durham's history, such as its enduring engagement with learning, often at an advanced level, and the importance of traditions linked to Cuthbert and the monastic heritage of the

north-east not only in its internal history but also as underpinning a wider impact on English (and sometimes Scottish and European) culture. Both music and the contents of the library and archive are given generous and merited provision which is put to good use. As Brown's unusually candid preface acknowledges, all such large-scale collaborative projects will have their stronger and weaker elements, and face challenges such as that presented in this case by the tragically untimely deaths of two key contributors -- it is fitting that in their overview of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Alan Bartlett and David Goodhew strike a deeply critical note of which the late Rob Lee would have approved. However, this reviewer felt that the nineteenth-century cathedral was least well served by the volume as a whole. The architectural history of the cathedral in this period, including the reordering of 1870-6 under George Gilbert Scott, is never properly brought into focus, while the late Hanoverian chapter personnel are condemned as embodiments of old corruption, thus missing an opportunity properly to explore their unusually significant role in the turbulent political conflicts of that period. Elsewhere, the connections between illustration and argument are not as clearly established as in other Yale volumes. The reader will have to wait until page 487 to discover why a carving of two Hanoverian milkmaids and a cow illustrates the foundation myth of the cathedral on page 24; throughout, a paucity of cross references to relevant plates leaves some of the discussion of material culture reading uncomfortably like an exhibition catalogue from which the illustrations have been removed. Despite these reservations, however, this remains a very welcome and useful volume.

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

ARTHUR BURNS